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FIJI EAST INDIAN EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS
IN MONTEREY COUNTY

BY
VINAY SINGH

ACTION THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN EDUCATION

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY MONTEREY BAY


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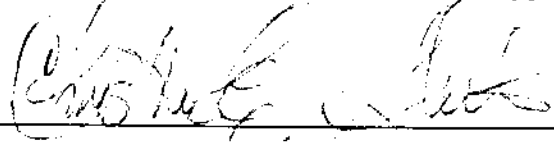
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ABSTRACT

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MAY 16, 2000

This research examines the cultural and economical background of East Indian indentured laborers in the Fiji Islands. It takes a view of the living conditions during and after their five year indentured labor contract, and studies the educational implications of these immigrants in Monterey County. Via historical, qualitative methodologies, ethnographic interviews and observations, and review of relevant literature, this research discovers the many educational problems encountered by the Fiji East Indian students and their families in Monterey County. It analyses the gathered data and suggests ways to facilitate the education of these Fiji East Indian immigrants.

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Introduction

Between 1982-1996 a total of 16,133 Fiji East Indians entered the United States through San Francisco and Los Angeles ports of entry. Because of the tourist industry which provides jobs for Fiji East Indians, a great influx of these immigrants settled in Monterey County. It is estimated that the Fiji East Indian population may have reached three thousand in Monterey County at the present time. Due to historical and political practices, some of these immigrants are illiterate in their own language making it even more challenging to acquire academic skills in English. These third and fourth generations of Indian population are arriving in the United States from the Fiji Islands, and will be referred to, in this study, as Fiji East Indians.

Background

The Fiji East Indians have experienced a series of formative episodes with England, India and Fiji Islands. Most of these people are faced with dilemmas in every aspect of their lives. The Fiji East Indians' grandparents were recruited and transported in thousands to the Fiji Islands between 1879 and 1916 as coolie laborers from North and South India to work for the colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR) on a five year contract. Upon arrival to the Fiji Islands, the immigrants were assigned to plantations. East Indians were at the hands of an

unscrupulous proprietor and they were virtually at their mercy. All East Indians worked on the plantations as cultivators regardless of their previous occupation and caste status in India.

At the end of the indenture system twenty four thousand immigrants did return to India and the rest did not use their so called free-passage to India. Instead, they settled in Fiji as free men and women. In the face of an unstable local economy based on cash crops and the limitations on economic mobility, changes occurred. Many looked to migration to the United States as a means to better educate their children and to have a better life for their families. Due to living precarious and nomadic lives under British rule these Fiji East Indians had been stripped of their culture, identity and heritage. The vast majority, who had been laborers under the indenture system, were "creolized, bastardized in some respect and almost everywhere fragmented and weak in leadership" (Tinker, 1974, p.21).

Fiji East Indians arriving from the third world into the United States have been victims of deception, betrayal, defilement and oppression for many years. They have very limited skills to enhance themselves in a technological competent world such as ours.

Research Questions

Hence, this research examines Fiji East Indian migration to the Monterey County area and their problems and successes

encountered by them in the educational system. This project seeks answers to the following questions:

1. What cultural and educational problems did the Fiji East Indians encounter during their migration to the United States? How were these problems handled by Monterey County educational systems?
2. How are these immigrants and their families fitting into American society in Monterey County? How successful are they in overcoming their problems?
3. What can schools do to improve the education of the Fiji East Indian?

Scope of the study and limitations

In this research I attempted to reveal and deliberate the problems faced by many Fiji East Indians in America. However, the focus is limited to the Fiji East Indian in the Monterey County area in terms of educational adjustment problems. Via historical, qualitative methodologies, ethnographic interviews and observation, and review of relevant literature, I hope that the findings in this research will become a microcosm of the Fiji East Indian in the United States.

Definition of terms

The most common words used by laborers was *girmit*, *narak* and *coolie*. Pathak (1939) defines *narak* in his Anglo-Hindi dictionary as the abode of condemned spirits. *Coolie* (coolly) means hired labor, a carrier (person who plies for hire). In Fijian, *coolie* means dog. To indentured laborers, *narak* (the deepest part of hell) represents a place you can't escape from. The word *narak* was used to mean an indentured laborer sentenced to five years' slavery in the cane fields of his Britannic Majesty's Crown Colony of Fiji. The signed contract was referred to as *girmit*, an agreement. The word *girmit* is not found in the Anglo-Hindi dictionary, but in his notes Lal (in Saunders, 1984) defines *girmit* as the Fiji Indian variant of agreement under which the indentured laborers emigrated from India. Today, it is generally used to refer to the total indenture experience (p.153).

During my childhood I mostly heard the older generation using the word *girmit* in describing work. The body language of those that used the word *girmit* was often an expression of sadness, anguish and pain. I feel that *girmit* is not a Hindi word because it is not used in other situations involving Indian indentured laborers, such as in Trinidad, Guiana, Mauritius, Africa, etc. After all, the Hindi language must have been creolized in Fiji. I will be utilizing this terminology, *girmit*, because it is significant in the process of writing the grievous history of indentured laborers in Fiji.

Organization and Methodology

This thesis consists of an introduction and five chapters. The introduction includes the purpose of the study, research questions, scope of the study and limitations, definition of terms, and organization of the reports.

Chapter 1 consists of historical and cultural background of Fiji East Indians. This chapter will also include the major trends that have shaped Indian society. It investigates the impact of the British in India and their role in indentured labor in the Fiji Islands and its implications on education.

Chapter II discusses the education implications of Fiji East Indian students and other minority students with similar backgrounds.

Chapter III describes the setting for the research. It describes the methodology used in the ethnographic studies and procedures used to gather and analyze data.

Chapter IV includes observations at Central Coast High School and interviews of the students, teachers and parents.

Chapter V discusses data and its implications in the education of Fiji East Indian students, and offers recommendation to school staff, parents and students.

Chapter 1

History and Cultural background of Fiji East Indians

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the historical and cultural background of the Indian people and to show how England's control of India and the Fiji Islands led to the indentured servitude of Native Indians and thus to the oppression and tearing down of a culturally stable society. It will show how historically, the Indian people originated from a culturally rich and politically advanced civilization, and how India's political structure was weakened and its economy was eventually almost entirely controlled by England.

India was well known before 3000 BC. It is among the oldest civilizations of the world. During this period populations increased in great density along the Indus River. These people developed their city life, agriculture, extensive commerce, highly developed manufactures run by both hand and animal power, and political organization. India, a pear shaped piece of land surrounded by water except for the Himalayan Mountain Range to the north is strategically located between the Middle East and Asia, and therefore is easily accessible to European, Egyptian, and Asian trade. India has fascinated westerners since the importation of Indian goods by Sumeria and Egypt that began over 5,000 years ago and by Babylon, about 700 years before Christ (Manisingh, Manisingh, 1999).

Many sea and land routes were discovered in search of India. Not only trade, but also the appeal of India's fertile

land and wealth brought in such invaders as the Aryans, the Huns, the Moguls, the Portuguese, the French, and the British. Many of these invaders came via the Indus River. The people who lived on the Indus River were non-Aryan called Dravidians (Indus people). They had a highly developed culture. They had large and small houses of brick and stone with inside work of wood. These houses had inside plumbing, which were really small passages constructed of bricks laid in mortar. They had city-wide sewage systems and swimming baths with special adjoining rooms for hot air treatments.

Dravidians mined for the metals and jewels as they needed them. They used horses, elephants, camels and bullocks to do the heavy work and draw the carts. There were merchants who traveled long distances to conduct business with the Dravidians. The Dravidians used mathematical systems that consisted of weights that were divided into ratios of sixteen.

Egyptians and Babylonians traveled and traded with the Dravidians (Indus people). In 3000 BC., the cloth in which Egyptian mummies were wrapped was dyed with indigo from India. Tamarind wood from India was used in Egyptian tombs. In this period Babylon was also using teakwood and muslin cloth from India.

Some of their groups were the Dasa, Dasyu, and Sudra. As more invaders came over the Hindu Kush Mountains, the Dravidians tried to defend themselves but lost. The Dasa group became servants to the Aryans. The Sudra group surrendered to the Aryans and were made part of their society. They were considered

an inferior group not suited to intellectual work, but they were not slaves. The Aryans moved along the Ganges River and met the Magadha people. They considered them equal, and the Magadha became powerful rulers.

Indus people were conquered and assimilated by the Aryans who invaded their land about 2500 BC. It is believed that the Aryans originated in the region of the Caucasus Mountains, Southern Europe or Mongolia because of their language. Sanskrit language is related to the Persian, Greek, Latin, Teutonic, Celtic, and Slavonic languages. Because Sanskrit was not a written language for many generations, the Aryans memorized literature and scientific information. This habit of memorizing continues to the present in the Indian culture.

Aryans cultivated fields and valued the cow because they were great assets both in their work and as a supplier of food such as milk, cheese, ghee (cooked butter), butter milk, and curd. Even the cow dung was used as fuel, and was spread on the walls of the house to keep away disease-carrying insects. In the life of a human, cows occupy the same position as a mother in the life of a child. A mother feeds her child on her milk. The cow's milk nourishes infants, young, old, sick, unhealthy human beings and also animals if they were abandoned by their mother. To this day, the cow is revered among Indians.

The only information we have about this period of Aryan history is written in the book Rig Veda. This book describes the Aryans and the people they found in India. It consists of poems written by both men and women. During this time women were

considered equal to men. They were educated and chose their own mates. This custom prevailed until the arrival of the Muslim influence.

The Aryans became extremely wealthy and developed all the occupations of a highly developed civilization from fishermen to doctors. Their money was made of gold and silver and their utensils were made of gold, silver, copper and bronze.

In mathematics, the Aryans were familiar with a symbol for zero and invented algebra, geometry, and used notation by tens. They invented the decimal system, and it was an Indian woman by the name of Lilawati who became an authority on mathematics (Jee, 1985). The Aryans were ahead of their time in not only mathematics, but also in music, leisure activities, government, and religious beliefs.

In music, they used seventy-two basic scales which led to the European scales used today. They had flutes and strings. For amusement, they had horse and chariot racing, dancing, acrobatics, wrestling, and gambling with dice.

The villages had their own democratic government which consisted of a governing board of five elected men. The king was chosen by an assembly (Sabha). This was the earliest known democratic governing body of a state. The villages were rectangular in shape surrounded by walls with eight gates, the Assembly House was located in the center of the city (Durant, 1954).

The Aryans brought in their own religious beliefs. Their religion was an attempt to control the spirits of nature. The

Brahmans (priests) had the power to control these spirits by special rituals and therefore they became very powerful. These spirits were like persons with god-like power, very much like the deities of Greece or the western concept of angels. Later came the belief that the inner life of all these spirits was one spirit called Brahma and each spirit was a characteristic of Brahma (Smith, 1965). This was a very advanced phenomenon and perhaps man's earliest belief in one God and the belief that happiness comes when inner life is joined to God's life. A prayer from 800 BC. is still used in India today expresses this belief:

From the unreal lead me to the Real,

From darkness lead me to Light (Thomas, 1971, p. 213).

Among the invaders who came to share in the wealth of India were the Huns from Central Asia. They married Indian women and formed new social-religious groups. Some Indianized their names and took the Hindu religion. By this time Mohammed's Muslim influence had spread into India and greatly affected the woman's place in society. Women were now considered inferior and had little influence in society. The Mongolian Muslims, or Moguls, came in search of India's riches and the Mogul King, Babar, established his rule in the Muslim city of Delhi in 1525. His grandson, Akbar, married a Hindu princess and became more accepting of the Hindu culture (Durant, 1954).

The struggle with invaders and the different religious and social beliefs brought in to India has had a great effect on the

social and educational opportunities of the Indian people. In order to protect young girls from being abducted by the invaders and converted into the Muslim religion, families arranged marriages at a very young age and had the daughters live with the husband's family. This custom prevails in Indian society today. It was not safe for young girls to be allowed out of the house, therefore, only girls whose parents could afford to hire private teachers received an education.

During the reign of Jahangir, the son of Akbar and his Hindu wife, the English obtained permission to begin trade between India and England. At this time there lived a group of independent thinking people called the Marathas. These were descendants of Aryans and Dravidians. In 1707, their leader was a woman, named Tara Bai. She defeated the Mogul emperor, Aurungzeb. The Marathas power kept on growing until by 1757 two thirds of India was free from Mogul rule. In 1761, Marathas occupied the government building in Delhi. Meanwhile, the Portuguese, the British and the French had established trading posts in India and were taking wealth out of the country and building armies to protect themselves from Indians and from each other. The French and Portuguese eventually lost to the English. The decisive battles of the British against the Muslims and French occurred in 1757 and 1764. This led the end of Muslim and Mogul rule in large part of Indian.

The British were well established. The Marathas challenged British power for fifty-seven years, but by 1818, so few states

were independent that India's economy was largely directed by England.

The British in the Fiji Islands

The British had sighted the Fiji Islands as early as 1643, but it wasn't until the 1800's that the British landed on the islands and then proceeded to send traders and missionaries. In 1857, a British counsel was appointed to aid the missionaries. The American Civil War, in 1861, created the need for the production of cotton, and plantation owners were having difficulties finding laborers to work in their cotton fields. Labor disorganization and political difficulties arose. The Fijian government, mostly the eastern small islands, agreed to place the Fiji Islands under Queen Victoria, and a Deed of Cession was signed on October 10, 1874. Surprisingly, this decision, which dictated the fate of all Fijians, was not made by the people in the two main islands, but by the people of the small islands of Lau and Bau. Political and social unrest was so prevalent, and government so powerless that takeover by the British was not questioned. At this time, Sir Arthur Gordon became the very powerful governor of the Fiji Islands (Mayer, 1963).

European settlers had begun plantations of coconut as well as cotton in the Fiji Islands. These Europeans found that they needed more laborers than Fiji could supply, so a large part of the laborers were brought in by blackbirding. This involved

kidnapping Pacific people from the Solomon Islands and using them as slaves. In 1874, blackbirding had been outlawed, and the American Civil War had ended eliminating the need for Fiji cotton. Britain was looking for a way to make a profit from her new acquisition. Sugar plantations had proved successful in the British Caribbean and so the British decided to grow sugar cane in Fiji. To obtain workers in Fiji, the governor, Sir Arthur Gordon, sent a requisition to the British agents in India to recruit emigrants to Fiji. The agents were offered a commission for each emigrant they recruited. They were to explain the indenture contract and accept volunteers of their own free will. This did not work as well as they had anticipated because Indian people were reluctant to leave their homeland and their culture. Religious convictions and fear of being ostracized by their own family and friends kept most Indians from signing up. The agents then proceeded to paint a beautiful picture of the Fiji Islands and promised a prosperous future. Because some indentured laborers had returned from Mauritius and Trinidad with a large sum of money, some people started to believe what they were hearing. This compounded by economic problems in India made the contracts more appealing. In order to promote family life in the Fiji Islands, the British government in India ruled that 40% of the emigrants must be women. Married women did not want to leave and their husbands did not want to take them. These men were under the impression that they were just going to the Fiji Islands to work for five years and then return to their home in India with free passage and accumulated wealth for their

families. Therefore, recruiters used trickery and abduction and ended up recruiting a large number of widows and outcast women who were looking for a new life.

The *Leonidas*, an Indian built ship, sailed for the Fiji Islands on May 14, 1879, with 489 indentured laborers, mostly young people in their twenties and early thirties. These young people must have been shocked at the conditions they encountered. Everyone became a coolie regardless of their caste in India. They were housed in barracks in a dormitory type setting. Each room was only about 10 feet by 7 feet and partitions didn't reach the ceiling. Rooms were occupied either by three single men or a married couple with up to two children. They lived and cooked within these walls.

Now that these workers had arrived, Fijian society had been saved, and financial stability assured. These *girmitians* worked thirteen hours per day Monday through Friday and five hours on Saturday. Women were paid less than men and neither was paid as much as they were promised. Not only were women paid less, but they were considered to be slaves to men in *narak*, Andrews (1937) found accounts of immorality imposed on women. He found writings that stated that, "One indentured woman had to serve three indentured men as well as outsiders, which resulted in cases of gonorrhea and syphilis" (p.21). Punishment for breaking the contract was severe and therefore the *girmitians* had no choice. If they missed any work days they would be fined, and their *narak* period would be extended by the number of days missed. Everyone had a task to accomplish. Some tasks were

impossible to accomplish and the employer would not pay for incomplete tasks. The *girmities* were treated much like African slaves in the United States (Mayer, 1963; Andrews, 1937).

Most *girmities* were threatened with revolvers, were whipped and were forbidden to go to the police. Abuses were rampant because the workers had no resources for justice.

Due to living conditions and low wages these *girmities* were not able to seek medical help or supply food for themselves. A low level of earnings as well as discontent and recalcitrance among indentured Indians affected the standards of nutrition and health (Laurence, 1971).

A missionary, J. W. Burton (1910), had become so concerned over the spiritual and moral welfare of *coolies* that he appealed to European officials to treat these immigrants "humanely and liberally". However, conditions remained intolerable and for some, the only escape was suicide.

S. A. Waiz (n. d.) found that the death rate in 1913 was 22.7 per one thousand indentured laborers compared to 10.7 for free men. The suicide rate for 1902-1912 was 926 per million for indentured laborers compared to 147 for free men and 63 for the Indian province from which most immigrants had come.

Among this injustice, there were some who sympathized with the Indian condition. W. A. Chapple (1921) mentioned in his book that a plea to immigration was accompanied with warnings to Europeans that they must treat Indians with consideration, giving them better wages and taking a human interest in their welfare... (p. 91). Later, in March 1912, G. K. Gokhale, an

appointed member of the Imperial Legislative council in India, requested an ending to the indentured labor system. The government of India did not take his advice for immediate abolition, but sent a deputation to report on the conditions in the colonies.

In 1914, India was shocked by the social abuse system and was unmoved by the Fiji government's adoption of proposals, substitution of fines for imprisonment and the labor laws. In 1916, the government of India abolished the indentured system. However, the *girmitians* had to finish their time in *narak*. It was not until January 1, 1920 that the last group of indentured laborers completed their servitude.

The right of a free return passage had been abolished in 1852 except for those who emigrated to Mauritius. Only applicants who had entered their names on Form 51 and on Form 52 (Report of the Royal Commissioners, (1885, p. 112) were entitled to free passage to India.

Because of the fear of being ostracized upon returning to India, and because they had not accumulated the wealth they had dreamed of, most of the free Fiji East Indians chose to stay in Fiji to work on land that they leased from the British. The free Indians were planters. They cultivated their own sugar cane as tenants of the CSR company. They acquired the status of tenants rather than landowners which is more of a social than economic status. The difficulties of tenancy and leasehold have been very unsettling for the Indian cultivator in spite of the immense industry created by the Indian population. The Fiji Indian can

never hope to possess the freehold of land on which families have spent generations of labor and toil (Andrew, 1937).

Indian farmers who preferred to cultivate sugar stayed in the valley rather than to lease more remote land for mixed farming. The Fijians who realized the profitability of sugar cane farming started to refuse to renew the leases and tried to farm the land themselves.

Eighty-three percent of the land is communally owned by Fijians and will never change ownership since the British gave the Native Fijians inalienable rights to this land.

Fiji Indians lived largely separate from Fijians as the government forbade Non-Fijians to settle in Fijian villages and later the ban was extended to all non-Fijians from Fijian communities. This is very interesting to me because the Salisbury Despatch of 1875 states that "Indian settlers...will be in all respects free men, with privileges no whit inferior to those of any other class of Her Majesty's subjects resident in the colony." A later report from the Fiji government stated that "The present administration of Fiji fully recognizes the value of Indians as permanent settlers, and is willing to concede them the enjoyment of equal civil rights" (Lawson, Lawson, 1996, p. 52).

Despite all these promises, the Fiji Indians remain locked into a second class citizen position with no rights. Have these laws been forgotten? In spite of Fijian population growth, awareness of their rights is being stifled by ignorance.

In 1936, Fiji East Indian population increased forty three percent due to high young-age marriage and increase in fertility rate, which was a much faster growth rate than the Fijians. This increase of Indian population brought fear to the European and Fijian population. The Native Fijians had to make sure that they controlled the Fiji East Indian advancement in social, political, and educational areas.

One way to control the Fiji East Indians is to check their leases every fifteen years and have them renewed every thirty years. Even now, in the year 2000, the Fijians are refusing to renew some of the leases. The Fiji Times (Hicks, July 17, 1999) reported that many Fiji East Indian families had been displaced after the expiration of their leases. Landowner Cagilaba complains that she has to put up with tenants on her land. She says, "We want our land back because we want to farm on it ourselves. We have waited long enough and it's about time that government sorts this problem out" (Hicks, July, 17, 1999). Hari and Gaura Wati Singh, 78 year old Fiji East Indians had just paid \$3,065.00 for their one year tenancy and expected to continue living there for the rest of their lives when they received an eviction letter from the NLTB (Native Land Trust Board). Mr. and Mrs. Singh said, "We feel very cheated. Considering our age we had always thought this would be our permanent home, but our life seems to have been cut short" (Couple faces eviction Fiji Times, July 13, 1999). These problems are a major reason why Fiji East Indians immigrate to the United States in search of freedom and better lives.

EDUCATION

Most girmitians were uneducated and for many years there was no school for their children. The missionaries were busy with Fijian and European schools and the government did not pay any attention to the growing numbers of Fiji East Indian children. There were a few efforts made to open schools for Indian students, but they failed due to the lack of funds. Education programs for Indian children were non-existent during the entire indentured period (Mayer, 1963; Legislative Council Fiji, 1926).

By 1927, Indian students were attending school, but the education system was inadequate. There were no textbooks, and there was no inspection system. In 1929, Hindi was made the initial language of instruction until fourth grade. Parents of students who spoke other languages could arrange for additional teaching of such Indian languages as Tamil, Telgu, and Urdu. Europeans felt that Indians should not be taught in English even though most parents and teachers were strongly in favor of English, since they saw it as a beneficial educational opportunity and as a means of getting non-manual work for their children.

An Indian boy's education consisted of labor skills such as farming. The girls were educated in domestic skills. Academic skills were offered only in private schools. However, Andrew (1937) found that the Marist Brothers Christian School in Suva

was not allowed to register some bright Indian boys along with European children.

In 1926, a report of the Education Commission was given to Commander Knight Huston advising what children should be taught in school. At this time there is only one school for Indians. In primary school English lessons should be only for the purpose of teaching how to read and speak English. Ability to write should not be stressed, nor should grammar be systematically taught. Only commonly used words should be used in the classroom. The focus of education was to assist in raising the standards of home life and village life generally. Training for Fijian and Indians girls 12-13 years old should be in domestic subjects such as hygiene and the care and nurture of children.

The Fiji East Indians emerged from a stable society with strong religious and family values. The unfortunate choice to immigrate to the Fiji Islands eventually wore down the self worth of these people. Their treatment only dulled but did not erase the dream to succeed and be self sufficient. It is this dream which brings many of these people to the Monterey area.

However, when these Fiji East Indians immigrate to the United States they encounter unfamiliar socio-cultural and educational values. Compounded with little knowledge of the English language, they have tremendous challenges to overcome.

Chapter 2

Education Implications of Fiji East Indians

In order to provide educational support for the Fiji East Indian students in Monterey County, we must first understand the cultural and economic background, educational struggle, and historical experiences of these immigrants. Since little information is available on the Fiji East Indian immigration, I will cite here research done on other immigrants with similar backgrounds.

Fiji East Indians have been a displaced minority for the last four generations. This has affected their outlook towards majority populations, educational systems, and politics. These immigrants come voluntarily to the United States but bring with them the scars of involuntary servitude.

Anthropologist John Ogbu (1978, 1988, 1990, 1992) describes voluntary immigrants as those who come to this country to better themselves economically or to provide a better future for their children. These immigrants come with greater expectations and adjust better to the educational system. They see cultural and language differences as barriers to be overcome. He describes involuntary minorities as those who did not choose to become members of a particular society but were forced through slavery or colonization. These minorities do not have the expectation of a better future as do the voluntary immigrants, and they

perceive themselves as victims of underserved oppression and discrimination.

Ogbu adds that voluntary minorities see participation in the mainstream culture as necessary and do not perceive this as a threat to their own minority culture or language. Involuntary minorities take the role of minority group against majority group. They feel that they have to express their own cultural identity and tend to develop behaviors different than those of the majority group. Voluntary immigrants develop survival strategies and work hard to live by and trust the rules of the dominant society. Involuntary minorities try to change the rules to benefit their groups, and they distrust the dominant society and their institutions.

Ogbu also found in his research that there is a considerable difference in education performance between these two groups. He has found that even though voluntary immigrants have many difficulties and tend to perform below average in academic areas, they are more likely to narrow the academic gap than the involuntary immigrants. The involuntary immigrants persistently under-perform in our educational system and maintain a lower position on the economic scale. The immigrant's success has a direct correlation to how the minority group is treated by dominant group.

Ogbu's (1978, 1988, 1990, 1992) theory is very intriguing to me because in my research I found that the Fiji East Indian population shows signs of both of these groups. It is not surprising that they show a mixture of reactions to a new

culture since they themselves are a combination of involuntary and voluntary immigration.

The indentured laborers taken from India to the Fiji Islands suffered somewhat the same psychological trauma as the African slaves brought to America. They may have been under the impression that they were going voluntarily, but the working and living conditions were those of involuntary servitude.

Immigration into the United States is voluntary but some of the psychological wounds still remain. Ogbu (1978, 1988, 1990, 1992) states that involuntary immigrants recognize that they belong to a subordinate and disparaged minority.

Grossman (1995) states that involuntary minority groups are unlikely to be accepted as equals for three reasons: the history of their relationship with dominant European Americans which has eradicated their culture, the enslavement of their ancestors, and the fact that they do not look or behave like European Americans. Prejudice against them seems permanent and institutionalized. This is the fate encountered by the Indians in Fiji to this day. It is from this denigration that present Fiji East Indians arrive in Monterey County.

In contrast, Margaret Gibson (1988) based on her study of Punjabi Indian immigration to the United States, states that the Punjabi students do quite well academically. These immigrants come from a stable home background and fall within the category of voluntary immigrants.

Even though the Punjabi do well, Gibson found that they suffered a loss of self esteem as they made the transition

between landowners and laborers. In this respect, there is a similarity between Punjabi and Fiji East Indians. They both leave behind a family farm and a life where they employ others to work for them. Owning their property gives them a sense of security which they leave behind. They come to United States to work as laborers for minimum wages and now see themselves at the mercy of their employers. A Punjabi man expresses his disappointment during an interview. He states:

 Their culture does not mix with ours. Secondly, they don't consider us as a part of the people of this country. They are prejudiced towards us...Some times we even think that it would be a good idea to go back to India, as we do not feel happy (Gibson, 1988., p. 286).

Paoze Thao (1994) in his research of Mong immigrants to the United States found that cultural shock is more detrimental than most of us can perceive. He found that these immigrants suffered disorientation of time, anxiety and withdrawal, fear of coping, unusual fatigue, depression and crying. Some refugees displayed psychosomatic symptoms such as recurring headaches and digestion problems. Basic daily tasks taken for granted by a typical American can be stressful for the immigrants. Such simple daily tasks as shopping for groceries, using public transportation and reading street signs became overwhelming.

Herbert Grossman (1995) also noted in his research that when people have to adjust to a culture that is significantly

different from their own, they often become confused, anxious, and frustrated because they don't know what is expected of them in different situations. They often cannot solve interpersonal problems and do not know what is not acceptable behavior in the culture. They may become angry at people whose behavior they can't understand. They also feel anxious and fearful about not being able to function adequately in the new culture or sad and depressed over the loss of their familiar way of life.

Grossman (1995) adds that students who immigrate to the United States also suffer culture shock in school. They become angry, anxious, sad, or depressed. Some students may withdraw from their teachers and other students or act aggressively toward them.

As educators concerned with the academic development of immigrant students we must be aware of the whole cultural identity of these students and must realize and understand the complexity of their situation. Sonia Nieto (2000) concludes that we need to understand that school achievement is a combination of "personal, cultural, familial, interactive, political, and societal issues" (p. 246). She adds that we must understand the sociopolitical context in which the students exist.

Phelan, Davidson, and Cao (1991) found in their research that for students "whose family and peer worlds stand in contrast to that of the school, academic success occurs sporadically" (p. 245). Success for these students was proportional to the teacher understanding of individual students and their needs. Students who perceived impenetrable borders

between family, peers, and school felt alienated from the school environment. They felt that their personal integrity and cultural background were being threatened.

Reflecting on all this research, I realize that even though the Fiji East Indians in Monterey County are faced with many of the same barriers as other immigrant groups, they have additional obstacles to overcome.

The Fiji East Indian involuntary servitude in the Fiji Islands caused them to lose their identity. They acquired all of the "caste" like minority problems and suffered the breakdown of the social fabric that held Indian communities together. Vijay Naidu (1980) describes the Indian immigrants as people cast adrift, rudderless and pilotless in the rough seas of the indentured labor system. Spiritual needs took second place to everyday drudgery. Religion lost its central role in the lives of these immigrants. They lost not only their socioeconomic status but also their spiritual roots.

As previously mentioned, after five years of servitude these Fiji East Indians became farmers. Even though they farmed in their leased land, they had a sense of ownership and the satisfaction that grows with being self-sufficient. This morale is lost upon immigration to the United States.

It is with this complexity of emotions that the Fiji East Indian students enter into the classroom, and it is up to educators to find a way to reach these students and motivate them by making some connection to societal benefits. We need dedicated teachers that will implement programs to validate the

student's cultural background and to override the negative atmosphere associated with socioeconomic status and language and cultural barriers. It is up to the educational system to empower these students to become successful citizens.

Chapter 3

Methodology

An ethnographic case study design was used to obtain sociocultural analysis. To ensure a diversity of perspectives, sets of interview questions were developed for students, students' parents, and teachers (see appendices C, D, E). These were administered over a period of three months. Interviewees were asked to sign a consent form as participants in the study (see appendix A). Classroom observations were conducted in three of the classes which had two or more Fiji East Indian students enrolled.

Setting

This study was conducted in Monterey County which is located 350 miles north of Los Angeles and about 130 miles south of San Francisco on the central coast of California. The school in which the study was conducted was built in 1905 and this is a 9th-12th grade high school. Central Coast High School belongs to the Central Coast School District (pseudonym is used for both high school and the district).

The school is located in an upper and middle class neighborhood. School grounds are clean and well-maintained. Buildings are surrounded with flowers and blooming shrubs. Interior and exterior walls are clean and free from graffiti.

The neighboring community is rich; most of the houses are spacious with well maintained landscaping.

Classrooms are spacious, well-lit and well-ventilated with huge windows. Some classrooms are decorated with colorful posters reflecting the individual teacher's philosophy. There are enough textbooks for class sets. The school library has a reasonably good selection of books that are appropriate to students in the mainstream classes.

Currently 1,723 students are attending Central Coast High School. According to the Monterey Peninsula School District Reference Guide (1999-2000) the total student enrollment of Central Coast District is 12,363. Breaking down the ethno-racial background of students in this school, I found: Indian and Alaska Native 1%, Filipino 6%, Pacific Islander 3%, Asian 9%, Hispanic 27%, Black 15%, and other Whites 39%. As for certificated staff (teachers), there are: whites 79.55%, American Indian 0.62% Hispanic 6.15%, Black 7.38%, Asian 4.60% and Filipino 1.70%.

There are 145 Fiji East Indian students currently enrolled in this district. At Central Coast high school there are only twenty Fiji East Indian Students - eight female students and twelve male students. Most of these students are in mainstream classes. Three recently arrived students are in an English Language Development Program.

Research Participants

Individuals were identified and were surveyed in areas of resettlement and education. Participants were selected based on their availability and their experience as Fiji East Indians in Monterey County. I interviewed five male and four female students and four parents. I also interviewed three of the teachers whose classrooms I observed.

Interviewees consisted of one freshman, two sophomores three juniors, and three seniors. These students immigrated to Monterey County from 1986 to 1998. Two students were recent arrivals, two had been here between four to five years, three had been here eight years and two had arrived fourteen years ago. The four parents I interviewed were between the ages of thirty-five and forty-two. Three of the four had not completed high school in the Fiji Islands or attempted to educate themselves in the United States. One parent had attended the university in Fiji and taken some courses at the community college here.

The three teachers I interviewed were Caucasian. The two female teachers had been in education for five to seven years. The male teacher had been teaching for more than 10 years.

Data Collection

Data were collected through observation and interviews. Observations took place in the classroom, library, and school grounds. I observed each of three classrooms for forty-five minutes every week for three months. Classroom observation notes were taken on an observation guide (see appendix B). I shadowed ten students during lunch and break time on the same days I observed the classroom, and kept running notes on student interaction with peers and school staff. Student and teacher interviews were conducted at school, and parent interviews were conducted in their own homes. Teacher interviews lasted about thirty minutes. Student and parent interviews lasted about two hours each. Some interviews were conducted in Hindi and later translated into English. These interviews were recorded, but pseudonyms were used to respect confidentiality and anonymity of the participants.

Data Analysis

The data were compiled by first separating observation notes from interview responses. The interview data were separated into students', teachers' and parents' responses. Then it was further separated by topics (see appendices B-E). The student responses were divided into: *historical and cultural background, problems with school work, social problems at school, problems with teachers and learning, ideas for*

improvement, and problems at home and in the community. The teacher responses were divided into: *learning progress, social behavior, and ideas for improvement*. The parent responses were divided into: *historical and cultural background, reason for immigration, and adjustment problems*.

The next procedure was a topic analysis. In order to determine a pattern, I examined the responses to each individual question. I cut and pasted the responses to each question and transcribed the quotes using pseudonyms for interviewees. I constructed a summary of the findings according to topic and transcribed individual questions followed by interviewees' responses.

Chapter 4

Observation and Interviews

I did my observations and conducted my interviews at Central Coast High School and at the homes of Central Coast High School students. As stated in Chapter three, the student population of this district is 39% White and 61% minorities. Three percent of these minorities are Pacific Islanders which include 145 Fiji East Indians. My observations were limited to twelve Fiji East Indian Students at this particular high school. I observed student behavior in and out of the classroom, and talked to teachers and students both formally and informally. I also interviewed four Fiji East Indian parents at their residence.

Observations

I conducted formal observations, which included note taking, in three of the classes in which Fiji East Indian students were enrolled. I noticed that most of the Fiji East Indian students were very shy and quiet. Only one of these students got up to ask for help from another student when the teacher wasn't looking. Not once did I see any of these students ask or volunteer to answer any questions. Occasionally, the teachers would ask one of these students a question, but most of the time there was no interaction between the teachers and these

quiet Fiji East Indian students. Students looked bored and disinterested.

Outside of the classroom, there was a definite difference between the American born Fiji East Indians and those who immigrated from Fiji. American born Fiji East Indians interacted with other American born minorities and Whites. They did not socialize with immigrants from Fiji. On the other hand, Fiji East Indian immigrants grouped together. Girls formed one group and boys another. These students spent lunch hours in the library quietly socializing. I didn't see any of these students in the cafeteria. On one occasion I heard the immigrant Fiji East Indian girls making remarks in Hindi about an American born Fiji East Indian girl. This girl was socializing with a White male student who was with a group of male and female friends. One of the immigrant girls remarked to another, "Look at that bitch. Look, look how she's acting with that guy."

A couple of Fiji East Indian boys who arrived in this country when they were four or five years old, were walking around with African-American boys. I observed the same scenario every time I visited the school. I asked a few of the students if they ever did anything else during lunch. With a surprised look, they responded, "No! This is what we do everyday."

Student Interviews

I formally interviewed nine of these Fiji East Indian students - five males and four females. Surprisingly, only one

of the students interviewed knew about his historical background. Even though students spoke Hindi, none of them could read or write the Hindi language. At school students felt alienated. They expressed that school was boring and scary. Four of them had to repeat grades. Two of these students were placed in special education classes. Three students had definite opinions of what schools could do to help them succeed.

Interview questions were divided into five categories: Historical origins, language, education, family and community.

Historical origins

Eight of the students interviewed didn't know about their historical origins. They hadn't been told about their great-grandparents and neither their parents nor the school discussed that part of the history. Only Mike knew about his background.

R: Do you know who was the first in your family to migrate to Fiji and how they were treated?

Mike: My great-grandparents came to Fiji to work on the sugar cane plantations. My grandmother told me that the British treated them like slaves. They didn't have any rights. She said that the Fijians stayed in the village away from the laborers.

R: Why did your parents decide to migrate to the United States?

Mike: My parents decided to come here because they were still being mistreated. They wanted a better life for themselves and for us. They came when I was seven years old.

R: *Can you read and write in Hindi?*

Mike: No, not really. I was too young when I came. My mother is trying to teach me now. I am really excited about learning more about Hindi and about our peoples' culture and traditions.

Problems with school work

These minority students were disproportionately placed in ESL, special education programs, and retained in earlier grades due to cultural and linguistic differences. Students expressed anxiety, and self-consciousness. They feared making mistakes because they knew they couldn't represent themselves due to language barriers in their new environment. Students were bombarded with conflicting home and school cultures.

R: *What problems did you encounter in school?*

Mike: I was put one grade behind. I would have been in third grade in Fiji but here they put me in second grade. I was scared, I didn't know anyone or speak any English.

Vin: I was retained in kindergarten because I didn't speak English well enough. I was dared to pull the fire alarm and I did. The principal asked me to pull my pants down and

paddled me in front of the fire chief. When I got in trouble in school, my uncle would "whip my ass." I was so embarrassed and lost. No one understood me and I lost interest in school. They put me in special education because they thought I had learning problems. The problem was that my English was not very good and I couldn't read very well. I had no friends. I found a few friends that are Black. They understand me. They're cool.

Shayal: I was nine years old when I came here. I knew English because I had gone to English Methodist School. They ignored my test scores and put me in ESL 1. My parents went to school to tell them I didn't belong in ESL, but they just ignored them. My teacher told me that I had passed the test and didn't belong in ESL, but they kept me in ESL for three years with Hispanic kids.

Nail: I came to America when I was nine years old. I spoke very little English. I was put in ESL with Mexican kids. They held me back the first year. They put me in a special education class. I don't understand why they put me there.

Guss: I came here in 1986. I think I was two or three years old then. My parents did not speak English to us at home, so I didn't speak English when I started school. They held me back in kindergarten. I didn't understand what was going on in the classroom so I would spent time learning English after school.

Social problems at school

All students said that they were alienated and were called names. These students endured harassment and discrimination since their first day in elementary school. School staff didn't seem to be aware of the situation. All students stated that they were called names by students of all races except African-Americans. African-Americans were the only ones who accepted them and became their friends. Some of the male students rebelled against this abuse and started fighting back, which led them to be classified as "trouble makers."

R: How did the students treat you at school?

Mike: Kids wanted me to play the games their way. I didn't understand them. They would point at me and look at me weird. I was called "gold boogger," "dot head," "cow lover," "chicken killer," "Brown skin," and "fucken Hindu."

Vin: I have been discriminated against since I was in elementary school. I got suspended for hitting a guy who had been calling me names since elementary school. I finally had enough. I played with Black kids because they were nice to me.

Shayal: White kids told me to go back to where I came from. I didn't feel comfortable at school or at any of the school activities. They have an "Island Club" but that's for

Samoans, Tongans, and other Pacific Islanders. We don't fit in.

Ram: Kids called me names like "camel jockey," "sand nigger," and "Buddha-Buddha." I grew up resentful and started fighting back. I got in trouble for hitting kids, but I had had enough.

Guss: I was called names by all races. They called me "camel jockey," "sand nigger," and "sheep herder." I got suspended twice for throwing things at kids and hitting people because they were saying things to me. White kids refused to play with me and made fun of my clothes because we bought our clothes at k-Mart.

Problems with teachers and learning:

Students felt that the teachers did not understand their needs. Most students were bored and felt they weren't learning much. One student dropped out of school because he had been placed in special education classes and felt he wasn't learning anything. Teachers would not listen to him or his parents. Students who had aspirations of going to college felt they weren't being prepared for higher education. Students felt discriminated against by teachers.

R: *Did you feel that you were learning and being challenged?*

Nail: They were teaching us second grade stuff. I knew how to add, subtract, multiply, and divide. I just needed time

to learn English. I was bored in the classroom. I didn't learn anything in special ed. Kids were not behaving in the classroom. I wanted to get out of special ed. but the teachers did not listen to my parents. I stopped going to school for a while. I am no longer in special ed.

Mike: I had a problem in high school. I was told that I would be retained. I questioned why? They told me I didn't have enough units. While in high school I took college classes at night and obtained a job that gives credit. They still wanted to retain me. I didn't pay attention in class because of lack of interest. Teachers were teaching the same thing that I had learned in middle school, and I was in college prep classes. I learned more in middle school than in high school. Many times I got kicked out class for asking questions. I have been discriminated against since I was in elementary school. In ceramics class I made a "Shiu-Ling" (Goddess symbol), and the teacher, Mr. Free, told me it was not art and somehow he broke it in the kiln.

Rubai: I am bored most of the time. Teachers don't call on me. Teachers just talk and talk and we don't learn anything new. If you are quiet, teachers just ignore you.

Leena: School is boring. I don't feel that my classes are preparing me for college. I don't think teachers think we can do college prep work in this class.

Ram: If teachers don't like you they just pretend you are not there, and you don't get any help. If teachers don't like you they send you to the office and you get paddled by the

principal. This is not a good learning place. Classes are boring and you don't learn anything.

I noticed in my classroom observations that the instruction was teacher centered and that the Fiji East Indian students played a passive role. There was little or no interaction between these students and the teacher, and the students acted disinterested and disengaged. Their body language portrayed disappointment and dissonance.

Ideas for improvement

Students know how the school can change to help them. They are crying for help from teachers, counselors, and the school district. They want academic and social programs that will include them in the educational process and school environment. They want college prep classes and scholarships that target their minority group. They want their culture validated when it comes to social clubs and to the types of food sold in the school cafeteria. They want to be understood by teachers and other school staff, and would like to see a program to educate staff and administrators about the culture of Fiji East Indian students. They want programs to bridge the gap between the school and their community.

R: Do you think there's something that the school can do to help the Fiji East Indian students?

Rubai: We need programs for Fiji East Indian students. Teachers need to learn about our culture. They don't understand us. We need programs to help us to go to college. Other people like Mexicans, Japanese, and Indians from India get scholarships, but we don't get anything. They don't believe we are college material. They think that all Indian girls just want to get married and don't need to learn anything.

Chai: They should have classes for teachers so they can learn about different students from different countries. They expect all of us to be the same. We need people to speak to us about opportunities for the future. Counselors don't understand. We need someone who cares to speak to our families because they are afraid and they don't understand.

Ram: They need to understand us. We can't even buy food at school unless it is junk food. Most food served here has beef in it. No one even cares. They have an Island Club. They have dances there. They don't even know that Fiji East Indian girls are not allowed to dance. If parents find out that a girl was caught dancing, they will beat the hell out of her. They will take her out of school and will arrange marriage for her. She will never be able to go college.

Problems at home and in the community

Most students were faced with difficult living arrangements when they arrived in Monterey County. They had to live in crowded conditions with close relatives who held two menial jobs and had no patience with the kids. They also felt strange and discriminated against by the dominant society in their neighborhood. There were added conflicts between home, school, and peer group values. Parents couldn't understand any correspondence sent by the school and had to rely on the students' interpretation. This added to parents' fear of losing power over their children's lives. Students, especially girls, were not allowed to socialize or attend any school activity, which caused further separation and conflict between the two cultures.

R: What problems have you encountered at home and in the community?

Ram: Actually I was bewildered and alone. My dad was working at two jobs and living with grandma. Grandma was in a rampage most of the time. We were living in a small space. Our home life was not happy and nobody understood us outside in the community. If friends came over, the White neighbors told them not park in front of their houses. We were not wanted.

Vin: When we came to this country we lived with my uncle. He physically abused me and my brother. He would beat us up

for any reason at all. My dad also beat me. White people in our neighborhood looked at us like we were weird.

Guss: I felt like a freak. I got a job as a waiter, and some White people said, "I don't want this waiter. Give me a White waiter". White kids wouldn't talk to me. My friends are Blacks.

Leena: I have few friends and if someone invites me to go to their house, my parents won't let me. I can't talk on the phone and can't go any place without my parents. I am not allowed to even do volunteer work in the community. My parents don't trust me. They are afraid I will become Americanized. They think I am going to bad things. Other Fiji East Indian girls will not talk to me because they have been here longer than I have and that makes them higher class. I am low class because I am a new immigrant.

Teacher Interviews

The three teachers I interviewed saw no difference between Fiji East Indians and other students in their classroom. They stated that students were not doing well because some were shy and some didn't do their homework. One teacher commented that Indian girls are shy but get better grades than the boys.

R: *How are the Fiji East Indian students doing in your classroom?*

Doug: They are not any different than any one else. Some are not doing well because they don't do their homework.

Diane: I have one boy with the same last name as yours. He is very quiet and never complains. I have another Indian kid who is always getting up and talking to other kids.

Linda: Girls are shy. Boys are more open and answer more questions. Generally speaking, Indian girls get better grades than Indian boys.

Two of the teachers felt that students understood what was going on in the classroom. One teacher felt that there's a lot that they don't understand and a lot we don't understand about them.

R: *Do you think these students may not be doing well because of language problems?*

Doug: No. These kids speak English and they understand what I am saying.

Diane: When I explain something to Vin, he nods that he understands. He just doesn't do his work. He is getting a D in this class.

Linda: I worry about these students, especially the girls. I think there is a lot they don't understand, and there is a lot we don't understand about them.

All three teachers stated that girls were quiet and shy. They found that boys were more talkative and social. One teacher noticed that one of her female students, who wouldn't socialized with her peers, showed great improvement when she bonded with an older female assistant.

R: How do these students behave socially?

Doug: Girls are wonderful. They are quiet and don't have any problems. They fit in like everybody else. The boys are more social and don't work as well.

Diane: I have to keep asking Vin to sit and pay attention. He's always asking the other kids questions.

Linda: I have an Indian girl who was failing and wouldn't talk to anyone until an older lady from adult school came to my class to do an internship. This girl befriended the lady and her work started to improve. She ended up with a B+. She didn't socialize with other students, but she worked well with this lady.

Two of the teachers found that the educational system is doing a good job. One of the teachers had some ideas for improvement.

R: Do you think there's something the school can do to help these students succeed?

Doug: There's nothing more we can do. We provide the education and it is up to them to learn the material. You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink.

Diane: We are already doing it. We have a good educational program. I don't just lecture. Students work in groups and I go around and help them. Students are assigned projects. They work in groups and help each other.

Linda: We need to have more parent communication. We need to establish a rapport with parents and students and let them know that we are interested in their success. I had a girl who confided in me that she was a Lesbian. Somehow one of her Indian friends told her parents, and she was immediately taken out of school. She was seventeen years old. I was told that her parents arranged her marriage. I never heard from her again.

Parent Interviews

All four parents interviewed stated that they had come to the United States for a better life for their children. They wanted to get their children away from the unfair educational system in Fiji.

R: Why did you decide to migrate to United States?

Shandra: We came to this country for the kids. We wanted a better education for them. In Fiji, Fijian kids can get into the university with a score of 200 on the New Zealand SAT, whereas Fiji East Indians need a score of 250.

Deo: We came here to educate our children. We have three sons and one daughter. My children would not have a chance in Fiji.

Kalika: I decided to come to America to give my children a better life than we had. I wanted easy access to education, and better living and working conditions. I wanted a better life for my sons. You can achieve your dream here if you work hard, and nobody will take your property away.

Joyti: We came here because my husband wanted to bring our son to the land of opportunity. I am glad we came here because my life is much better here. Women can work here and we can make decisions.

All four parents complained about the unfairness of the present government in Fiji and the lack of the opportunity for Fiji East Indians. One mother stated that she was afraid for the safety of their daughters in Fiji.

R: *What was your life like in Fiji?*

Shandra: Our life was good until the military coup in 1994. Now the government is not fair. Fijians rule the crown land and try to take free-hold land away from the Indians. They are also taking jobs away from us. I have two daughters and girls are not safe in Fiji. If we don't do what the Fijians want, they will rape our daughters in front of us.

Deo: The government is bad. There are a lot of political problems. We can't own land, only lease, and it's hard

for us to get a good job. The education is not the same for the Indians and Fijians. Indians don't have the opportunities the Fijians have.

Kalika: Life in Fiji is very hard. We worked long hours on our farm to make money to send our children to school. Sometimes there wasn't much money to take care of the family after we paid school expenses.

Joyti: Our life was good. My husband had a good job, but the government changed and there was no future.

Parents felt that the United States offered a much better opportunity for their children as well as for themselves.

R: *How is your life different here?*

Shandra: My husband was a land owner in Fiji. He worked on our own land, and I didn't work. Here, he has to work harder and I also work. Our ancestors worked as *girmit* in Fiji and we are doing *girmit* here, but we know it's temporary. We don't have things, but we have a chance to build a future for our family.

Deo: Here we work hard but our children have a chance to get a good education and a good future. At least here if we work hard we will enjoy the results later on.

Kalika: Government here cares for people. It helps young people get an education and helps old people with medicare and social security. Also, in this country you can go to school even if you are old. You can even work and go to school.

Joyti: In Fiji I did not work. Here I work and make money to help the family. My husband is sick now and can't work. If we were in Fiji, I don't know what we would do. My son is still in high school. We are not rich but we are happy that we can take care of our family. Here my son will have a chance to be successful.

Parents are worried that their children will lose their language and their culture. The two mothers I interviewed expressed concern about keeping their values at risk of losing the respect of their children.

R: Are you worried that your children will lose their cultural identity?

Shandra: Yes, I am worried that my children will forget their culture and will lose respect for their elders. They are already forgetting the language and questioning our ways. My daughters think that I think like a grandparent, and they are rebelling against our culture.

Deo: Yes. I see first generation Hindustani acting like Americans, and I'm afraid that my kids will not listen to me and try to become American.

Kalika: I am a little worried, but I just hope my kids choose the right path for their lives.

Joyti: Yes, that is why I spend time talking to my son about his roots and religion. I am trying to teach him how to read and write in Hindi. Also, we sing Hindu religious songs everyday. There is no temple or any community program to

help us keep our culture and religion alive. We, Indian people, can't even hold religious service at home because White neighbors will complain.

All participants were willing to share their feelings and ideas. By speaking to students, teachers, and parents, I got a better understanding of the obstacles faced by the Fiji East Indian population in our schools and community.

Students felt misunderstood and misrepresented at school. They saw the need for programs that would benefit them academically as well as socially. Teachers believed that they were implementing a curriculum that benefited their school population. They didn't see any problem with the Fiji East Indian students and therefore saw no need for new programs. Parents felt disconnected from the educational system and expressed concern of not being able to participate in their children's educational plan. Another concerning issue for parents was how they could help their children succeed in the dominant society without compromising their cultural and social values.

Chapter 5

Implications

In observing Fiji East Indian students and speaking to them and their parents, I realized the tremendous impact of the cultural clash in the lives of these immigrants. I was appalled by the treatment they endure at school, and by the lack of understanding of teachers and other school personnel. The loss of cultural and historical background has led to a fragmented and distorted displaced society. Family values have lost their purpose and clarity. While trying to hang on to their culture, parents lose communication with their children, and children lose respect for their culture and their parents. Parents feel a loss of self-worthiness because they are now laborers instead of landowners. Surprisingly, they do not complain about the hard work or long working hours in order to survive in Monterey County because they see the possibility of a better future for their families.

These immigrants come from a history of involuntary servitude. They have been viewed by Fijians as inferior citizens for four generations, and now they are being pressured into emigration to other countries. Most choose the United States because it is known as the land of opportunity. They arrive here as voluntary immigrants with scars of an involuntary minority. In my classroom observations I noticed behavior which matches the description of Ogbu's (1978, 1988, 1990, 1992) involuntary minority theory. The students seemed disengaged and

disillusioned. They demonstrated signs of boredom and indifference. In interviewing these students, I learned that they were bored and felt they were not learning anything. They expressed anger about the low expectations the teachers had of them, and most had opted not to seek higher education. The majority of the boys had been in trouble for fighting because they felt angry about the way they were being treated by other students. Even though some of these students were doing well academically, they refused to do homework and resisted learning because of the prejudicial treatment they received. These are characteristics of involuntary minorities as described by Ogbu (1978, 1988, 1990, 1992) and Grossman (1995).

Some of the behaviors I observed are also typical voluntary immigrant behaviors. Some of the shyness and withdrawal from the environment is also due to cultural shock, which is common to all immigrants. Students are caught between two languages and two cultures. School and home values are not the same. They are constantly battling two worlds which they do not understand them, and yet they are expected to understand both worlds and know when and how to change to fit into both cultures. Sometimes this cannot be done. In the interviews, students mentioned that if the girls chose to dance in order to fit into the Pacific Islander Club, they ran the risk of being taken out of school and married off if their parents found out. Talking to boys either in person or on the phone could have the same result. Because of the strict rules under which Fiji East Indian girls are raised, being in America is extremely difficult for these

girls. This is the reason why girls are so quiet in school. This is the only way they know how to protect themselves. Even I, as a Fiji East Indian myself, was denied permission by a father to interview his nineteen year old daughter. He rudely told me in Hindi, "No, she has no time to talk to you, and she doesn't have anything to say to you." Cultural conflicts affect students and parents. No one knows exactly what their role is in a new society.

Another concern brought out by parents was the lack of cultural and religious awareness in the new generation growing up in America. I, myself, was astounded by how little these young people know about their roots. Their knowledge about their written language is extremely limited. The first generation Fiji East Indians are also losing their Hindi language. Only one of the parents interviewed was trying to keep the language and culture alive by teaching her son language and history at home. This young man was the only student I interviewed who knew about his ancestors and what they had endured. By not knowing the rich cultural background of their ancestors and why they made the choices, these students are missing a basic ingredient of self-worth.

Most Fiji East Indian immigrants worked on land leased from the Fijians. Even though they did not own land, they owned the crops and were self-employed. The change from self-employed to employee has a psychological impact on these immigrants. One of the mothers I interviewed expressed her feelings on the subject by stating, "Our ancestors did *girit* in Fiji and now we are

doing *girmit* here. "Recent arrivals have to live with relatives in crowded conditions, and students reported being beaten by parents and relatives for any little misbehavior such as forgetting to do a chore. One student said that his grandmother was in a constant "rampage." Families working for menial jobs are considered lower class by established Fiji East Indians. This exemplifies Ogbu's (1978, 1988, 1990, 1992) description of involuntary minorities who endure menial positions and are never really assimilated into the mainstream society. These immigrants feel that they are being alienated by their own people as well as by the other ethnic groups in America. These families work hard to fulfill their dream of freedom and a better life for their children. All parents interviewed expressed the belief that the future will hold a better life for their families.

The psychological impact on new immigrants is not unique to Fiji East Indians. We see similar reactions in Gibson's (1988) study of Punjabi Indians and in Grossman's (1995) research on new immigrants. What is unique about Fiji East Indians is the fact they were displaced citizens in their own country for four generations and already possessed many psychological scars before migrating to this country. As a result of the life they lived in Fiji, these immigrants have developed a life style that does not assimilate well with the American way life.

Interviewing students was a rather painful experience for me. These students, so calm and composed, give the impression that everything is just fine. Teachers remarked that the students understood what was going on and that girls,

especially, did not have any problems. In interviewing the girls, I heard the cry for acceptance and understanding. One girl stated that the teachers didn't think they were college material. Students kept saying, "They don't understand us.", "Teachers need to learn about our culture," "If you are quiet, teachers just ignore you."

In the last two decades, the educational system has been bombarded with non-English speaking immigrants, and school districts have made great efforts to offer these children a good education. However, we must realize that even though immigrants have language problem, they do not share the same cultural assimilation problems. We cannot expect a metamorphosis to occur just because we teach them English. We need to be aware of cultural differences and home life situations. School personnel have begun to understand some of the obstacles faced by voluntary immigrants, but the cultural fragmentation of the involuntary immigrants is still foreign to them. The involuntary immigrants, such as the Fiji East Indians, have never experienced complete assimilation into any society. Discrimination is all they encountered both at school and in the community. While all immigrants face a period of adjustment, they perceive this as temporary and feel that hard work and determination will again offer them a place in the dominant society. On the other hand, the involuntary immigrants see the present situation as a continuation of subjugation and begin to feel that a place in the dominant society is unattainable. Therefore, these immigrants tend to rebel against the dominant

society and build a cultural barrier in order to protect themselves from the process of subordination. We see this withdrawal of the Fiji East Indian students, especially girls. This method of protecting is misunderstood by teachers who believe that there are no problems. Educators need to be aware of the psychological make-up of these students who have never felt part of any dominant group. Self worth is a much harder concept for them to accept. Understanding the students' historical background is essential before we can help them gain self worth and visualize a better future. If the students feel that we don't understand them, they will dismiss all talk of self worth or future success as something for someone else. They see this as theory of the dominant society for those who belong. We need to be educated on the cultural background of the students we serve.

Only by understanding where these students stand, emotionally as well as academically, can we educators begin to make a difference in their lives. The students themselves stated that there should be classes for teachers to learn about the different students. Counselors, administrators, and community liaisons need to understand the complexity of these students who need so much guidance in order to achieve their dreams and the ones their families sacrificed so much for. Ignorance is not an excuse. Good intentions will not get the job done.

Great research has already been done by Grant and Sleeter (1999) on "Education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist." We do not need to reinvent the wheel. We

need to take these approaches and put them into practice. In their book Turning on Learning (1998), Sleeter and Grant show us how to bridge the curriculum to make lessons relevant to the students' lives. We need to tap their prior knowledge as well as their hearts in order to make education a meaningful experience. The knowledge is there. We need to put it into practice and give our students a reason to attend class and experience the joy of learning.

This research shows a great need to bridge the gap between students' academic and social environment. Educators are on different educational latitudes than the students and parents. They are not striving to connect or to build educational bridges that enable these Fiji East Indian students to succeed and to adapt to the traditional requirements of the classroom. In order to strengthen and to expand the quality of education of Fiji East Indian students in the Monterey County, I offer the following recommendations to school staff, parents, and students.

Recommendations

To School Staff

School staff must become aware of the cultural uniqueness of the Fiji East Indian students and of the Fiji East Indian Community. Some of the early immigrants from Fiji have become educated and credentialed to work in the educational system. The school district should seek out these educators to work

closely with the Fiji East Indian population. All school staff should attend training seminars from a Fiji East Indian educator or someone who is aware of the cultural implications. Staff must realize that there are great cultural differences between Indians from India and Indians from Fiji.

A unit on Fiji East Indian culture should be offered to all students in order to eliminate racist remarks. Non-linguistic clues, especially facial and eye expressions are a major factor in Fiji East Indian communication and this should be understood by the whole school population. School personnel also need to be aware of the ramifications of using an angry tone of voice with these students. Students will withdraw and it will then be impossible to gain their trust. School personnel should not intimidate students in any circumstances. These Fiji East Indian students come from a segregated school and are very sensitive to a negative atmosphere and can sense racist attitudes.

A school that validates a student's home environment and shows acceptance and appreciation for his or her parents builds that student's sense of identity and self-esteem.

School community liaisons who speak Fiji-Hindi should be hired to work with the community. Preferably, both a male and female should be hired in order to reach both parents. If this cannot be done, then a college educated Fiji East Indian female who is knowledgeable in multicultural education would be a second choice, since she would be able to communicate with both parents. Females who hold college degrees are respected by both genders. On the other hand, a female parent will not feel

comfortable or express her concerns to a male, regardless of his position.

The district should offer classes to educate Fiji East Indian parents on school policies and opportunities, and on civic responsibilities. These classes should be offered in Hindi in order to benefit all parents.

It is important for the school to have open communication by dialoguing with parents and allowing them to become joint partners in the education of their children. Parents who feel comfortable coming to school and interacting with school personnel will become interested in what goes on in their children's academia. Knowing that their parents are interested in their education and have a high regard for the learning process will make students more eager to do well in school.

To Parents

Parents must spend time with their children. Even though they have to work long hours to make ends meet, they must spend quality time with their children and continue to guide them as they did back in Fiji. Parents must educate themselves on American culture so they can have the necessary tools to expand their paradigms on the upbringing of their children. Ignorance of Americans customs often leads to mixed signals on what is acceptable and what is not.

Adult supervision is extremely important. Parents must realize that extended family support is just as important here as it was in Fiji. Parents must also realize that a girl's

education goes beyond domestic training. Learning to take care of a home is no longer enough education for a female. Parents must place the same value on their daughters' as on their sons' education.

Parents must make an effort to communicate with the school to make their wishes known. They need to organize parent groups to make their voice heard in the educational system. They must express their concerns and make sure these concerns are addressed by the system.

To Students

Students should understand that parents have no choice but to work at two jobs. They are fulfilling their dreams for their children to have a better education and a good life in this country. Students must take advice from their parents, even though they may feel that their parents don't understand the American way. It is also important for young people to remember that parents do not want their children to lose their cultural identity, and merely assimilate and become Americans.

Students must remember that their culture teaches respect and therefore must show respect for the American culture as well as for family values. Young people who act disrespectfully must realize that they are disgracing their family name and are bringing shame to their parents.

These students are constantly bombarded with contradicting views from both the dominant society and parents' culture. However, they must understand that their parents are also

living in two cultures and are trying to adjust to a new living environment, new employment, and not only a different language, but also different cultural groups and religious beliefs.

Students must try to understand and adjust to traditional expectations of the public school. They must learn to overcome cultural, class, and linguistic barriers that could prevent their active participation in the educational system.

Suggestions for Future Study

While doing my research, I noticed that these Fiji East Indian families who come from a culture which values strong family ties, are witnessing a weakening in their family fiber. Young people are rebelling against their parents and finding themselves involved in gangs, drugs, and illegal activities. There is a high drop out rate, especially among females, and young children are often not supervised or are taken care of by older children. These children are given too much responsibility at a young age, and often rebel by making their own decisions and going their own way.

Further research is needed in this area in order to empower parents to keep the family unit strong and to assure the educational success of their children.

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Appendix A

CSU Monterey Bay M.A. In Education Consent Form

Project Title: FIJI EAST INDIAN EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS
IN MONTEREY COUNTY

Description of role that human subjects will play in the project, including what they will be asked to do, how much time will take, questions they will be asked (if applicable), how their privacy will be maintained. risk an benefits they may incur.

I, _____ (Name of participant) state that I am over eighteen (18) years old and I wish to participate in a research project conducted by Vinay Singh (Name of Investigator).

I acknowledge that Vinay Singh (Investigator) has fully explained to me the risks involved and the need for the research; has informed me that I may withdraw from participation at any time without prejudice; has offered to answer any

inquires which I may make concerning the procedure to followed;
and has informed me that I will be given a copy of this consent
form.

In the event that I believe that I have suffered any
physical injury as the result of participant in the research
program, I may contact the Coordinator for the M.A. Program, Dr.
Christine E. Sleeter at (408) 583-3641.

I freely and voluntarily consent to participation and/ or
my child in the research project. I

_____DO want to reveal my identity and hereby give
my permission for the investigator to quote
my name of my child's name in his/her
thesis or project.

_____DO NOT want to reveal my identity and I understand
that a pseudonym/fictitious or an assumed
name will be used to quote my name or my
child's name in his/her thesis or project.

Signature of Participant or a parent

Signature of Investigator

Date

Date

Resource: Thao, CSUMB, 11/25/98

Appendix B

Observation Guide

Where is student sitting in the classroom (in front, middle, or back)?

Does the student look comfortable in the classroom setting?

Does student participate voluntarily in classroom?

Does student seem engaged in subject?

Does the student socialize with other students?

How does student function in group work?

What teaching technique does the teacher use?

Does teacher ignore or single out student?

Appendix C
Student Interview

Historical Origins:

1. Who were the first in your family to migrate to Fiji?
2. When and why did they migrate to Fiji?
3. Did your family go to school in Fiji once they migrated?
4. How was your family treated by the Fijians?
5. How was your family treated by the British?
6. Why did your family decide to migrate to the US?
7. When did you and your family migrate to United States?

Language

1. How many languages do you speak? What are those languages?
2. Can you read and write your native language?

Education

1. What kind of educational problems did you face when you migrated to Monterey county?
2. How many years have you attended school in Monterey County?
3. Did you speak English when you arrived in Monterey County?

4. Were you in ESL, LEP class or did you receive any special service such as special education, speech therapy or psychological services.
5. Were school members such as teachers counselor, principals helpful in planning your educational goals?
6. Was there any special arrangement made for you in the classroom so you could be successful?
7. Did you have any friends in school? If yes, what cultural background were they?
8. Did your friends understand your cultural background?
9. Tell me more about your experience in school.
10. Do you participate in any extra-curricular activities?
11. What you do think educators can do to facilitate and enable the learning of a Fiji East Indian student?
12. Do have any question or do you want to add anything about education, family culture, teacher, etc. that you think it important for your community and educators to know?

Family and Community

1. When you first arrived from Fiji, did you have any friends or family in the area?
2. Did your neighbors understand your cultural background?
3. Did you find any differences between family values and the American way of life?
4. How are you getting along in both cultures?

Appendix D
Teacher Interview

1. How are these students doing in your classroom?
2. Do students interact with other students?
3. Do the students willingly participate when asked for their opinion?
4. Do you think some of these students may have learning problems?
5. What can schools do to help these students succeed?

Appendix E
Parent Interview

Background

1. What was life like in Fiji?
2. What kind of work did you do there?
3. Did go to school in Fiji?
4. What was the highest grade you completed?

Immigration to United States

1. Why did your family decide to migrate to the United States?
2. How do you feel about this decision?
3. How many family members migrated with you?

Resettlement in Monterey County:

1. What changes did you encounter when you arrived in the United States?
2. How have your children adapted to a new culture?
3. Do your neighbors understand your cultural background?

Values

1. Did you encounter any cultural problems when you arrived in Monterey?
2. Are you worried that your children will lose their cultural identity?
3. Do you plan to continue Hindu values and traditions?